

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

I bring you tidings of great joy.' Then my soul was filled ; she was drowned with the truly blessed in the Divine Essence by union and affection of love, and so great was the delight that my soul possessed that she no longer beheld the past sorrow of seeing the offence against God, but said : * O happy and fortunate fault.'"¹

In the light of this vision, a few days before Easter, which this year fell upon April 13, Catherine offered her services to the Republic of Florence as mediator between it and the Pope : " remembering the word that our Saviour said to His disciples : *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*" The passover which she would fain eat with the Florentines is that of peace and union with the Church, within whose body alone can they receive the paschal mysteries, the fruit of the blood of Christ and the heritage of eternal life.

" You know well," she wrote, " that Christ left us His vicar for the cure of our souls ; for in nought else can we have salvation, save in the mystical body of Holy Church, whose head is Christ, and we are the limbs. And whoso is disobedient to Christ on earth, who holds the place of Christ in heaven, does not partake the fruit of the blood of the Son of God ; for God has decreed that this blood and all the sacraments of Holy Church, which receive life from this blood, should be communicated and given to us through his hands. We cannot go by another way, nor enter by another gate; for the first Truth said : / *am the way, the truth^ and the life*" He who rebels against the Church is a rotten member, and what is done to His vicar on earth, be it reverence or insult, is done to Christ in heaven. "Then, if God is at war with you, because of the injury you have done to our father and His vicar, I tell you that you are weakened; for you have lost His aid. Let us grant that there are many who do not believe that they offend God in this, but think that they are offering Him a

¹ Letter 219 (87), amended by the Harleian MS., from which we learn that Felice da Massa was one of those who accompanied Raimondo and Giovanni Tantucci to Avignon.